

THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM OF GHANA

Ghana operates on a 6-3-3-4 system:

Primary School	--	6 years
Junior Secondary/High School	--	3 years
Senior Secondary School	--	3 years
(Senior High School entrants 2007- 2009 – 4 years)		
University Bachelor's degree	--	4 years

Language: The sole official language of instruction throughout the Ghanaian educational system is English. Students may study in any of eleven local languages for much of the first three years, after which English becomes the medium. Students continue to study a Ghanaian language as well as French as classroom subjects through at least the ninth grade. All textbooks and materials are otherwise in English.

Senior Secondary School/Senior High School: 375,000 Ghanaian students take the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) at the end of JHS Form 3 (ninth grade) in seven subjects. Admission to Senior Secondary/High School is competitive: only 150,000 students can be admitted into the 500 public and 200 private national secondary schools. The vast majority of Ghanaian students attend public boarding schools, many of which are highly competitive; there are only half a dozen international private secondary schools in the country, collectively graduating about 300 students a year and offering the IB or A-level curricula.

The Senior High School was introduced in 2007, expanding the system to four years but not otherwise changing the curriculum, a policy that is being reversed after three years, as a result of which there were no graduates in 2010, and there will be two cohorts graduating in 2013. In the public national schools, all students take a Core curriculum consisting of English Language, Integrated Science, Mathematics, and Social Studies. Each student also takes three or four Elective subjects, chosen from one of seven groups: Sciences, "Arts" (social sciences and humanities), Vocational (visual arts or home economics), Technical, Business, or Agriculture. The secondary school transcript should contain a letter or percentage grade for each subject, for each of three terms, for the three (four) years of senior secondary school, equivalent to the tenth through twelfth (thirteenth) grades. Students' Term Reports (report cards) contain rank in class for each subject as well as grades for classwork and end of term exams. The grading system is tough: 80-100% is usually an A, a grade rarely awarded.

At the end of Senior Secondary/High School (twelfth/thirteenth grade), all students take the West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination, or WASSCE, (SSCE through 2005; WASSCE beginning in 2006) in each of their seven or eight subjects. These exams are given nationwide in May-June each year, but the results are not available until the following October. Grading is exceptionally tough: 3% of grades are A's, and while 75% of grades are passes, only 43% of grades are credit passes of A1-C6. C's can be quite competitive grades.

SSCE Grading System	WASSCE Grading System	Points	Frequency
Credit Grades			
A	A1	1	3%
B	B2	2	3%
C	B3	3	12%
D	C4, C5, C6	4	31%
Pass Grades: not acceptable for tertiary admission			
E	D7, E8	Pass – no credit	29%
Failing Grade			
F	F9	FAIL	21%

The minimum university standard for admission to post-secondary education is a 'C-' average on the SSSCE or WASSCE, with credits (A-D or A1-C6) in all subjects. U.S. universities should not admit Ghanaian students who have not attained at least this level. Students are expected to retake exams in subjects they have failed. Colleges should require a photocopy of the WASSCE Statement of Results bearing an original signature and stamp from the headmaster or headmistress, as well as the transcript. You are strongly encouraged to verify these documents at source, through the West African Examinations Council's online system at www.ghana.waecdirect.org. The student provides you with a PIN number that they purchase for the equivalent of \$3 (available at post offices or WAEC regional offices), that is used to retrieve a printable copy of their WAEC results. This is the fastest and most reliable way of verifying a student's results from Ghana. All results from all WAEC exams dating back to 1993 can be verified through WAECDirect.

University Education: Ghana's tertiary institutions enroll over 200,000 students in undergraduate, graduate, certificate and diploma programs in a full range of academic and professional fields. The National Accreditation Board (www.nab.gov.gh) lists 140 accredited institutions, both public and private, offering four-year degrees as well as two and three-year diplomas, which are not equivalent to Bachelor's degrees, but undergraduate transfer credit can be awarded. Eleven percent of tertiary students are enrolled in private institutions.

Ghanaian university admission is highly competitive, especially in fields such as medicine, engineering, law, business and pharmacy. The quality of education is considered reasonably high, evidence that human resources are more significant than material resources. In an effort to attract international enrollment, all Ghanaian universities operate on a modular, semester system. The University of Ghana is committed to 10% international population and attracts significant numbers of American students, as well as students from Africa and Europe. The United Nations University operates several programs on campus in fields of health and development.

Ghanaians in the United States: 2,900 Ghanaians are enrolled in over 600 U.S. institutions in all 50 states. Their influence is significant: each year, newly enrolling Ghanaian students are awarded \$5 million in financial assistance for study in the United States. Ghanaian public secondary school and university graduates regularly attain admission to the most competitive universities in the United States.

Testing: The SAT is offered six times a year at four locations in two cities. The GRE, GMAT and TOEFL are offered at least weekly at computer-based test centers in Accra; IELTS and PTE-A are also available. Although we want students to demonstrate their commitment and competitiveness, we advocate the use of testing only as warranted, and discourage institutions from requiring the TOEFL of students who can adequately demonstrate their English proficiency by other means.

Educational Advising: The EducationUSA Advising Centers in Accra and Kumasi, sponsored by the Public Affairs Section of the United States Embassy, serve over 20,000 students per year in a wide range of programs designed to strengthen students' applications and their readiness for U.S. higher education. We are eager to work with you to make it possible for more Ghanaian students to enroll in your institution. Please contact the Educational Advisors, in Accra or Kumasi, and refer your Ghanaian applicants to us for any assistance that we can provide.

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